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HOMEMAkers' CHAT

Thursday, March 20, 1941.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "SPRING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from various bureaus in the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The mailbag today reveals a trend toward sprucing things up around the house. The first letter asks how to refinish an old bed, and the next how to clean a wall. Then there's a letter from a New England farm woman who would like to open her home to tourists this summer.

Let me read a letter from Pennsylvania first. This woman says: "I have a 'cord bed' about 150 years old. I want to refinish this bed in its natural wood finish. After I get the paint off should I hand-rub the wood with boiled linseed oil? And should I use a varnish base?"

This letter was referred to the experts on furniture woods in the Forest Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Here is what they say:

"If your old bedstead is not elaborately carved so that it would be too hard to rub it down, you can get a beautiful finish simply by using a mixture of two parts boiled linseed oil to one part of turpentine. Do not use a varnish base or any other treatment except the oil mixture.

"You rub the oil on the wood repeatedly until you get the fine satiny lustre you want. You may need from 4 to 12 coats of oil. So prepare yourself for some real work! But once properly rubbed, the bedstead will need no waxing, and the wood will stand water, heat and scratching.

"The work has three main steps. One, take off the old finish. Two, repair and sandpaper the wood. Dust it off after sanding, before you begin to oil. The third step is the oiling.

"To make the oil finish, heat the oil and turpentine in a double boiler.

On plain surfaces hot oil penetrates the wood more quickly than cold oil and brings out a richer color. On carved or grooved parts use the oil cold, and be sure to get all traces of it out of the crevices.

"Use a soft rag without lint to put the oil on. Rub from 5 to 20 minutes until the wood has absorbed all the oil it will take. The time depends on the condition of the wood, and the temperature of the oil and of the room. Change cloths and wipe off all excess oil. Then begin rubbing for another 10 or 20 minutes with a rough polishing cloth, such as a linen cement or grain bag, or a woolen cloth, wrapped around a scrub brush.

"You keep putting on the oil and rubbing it in at intervals for several weeks. Let each coat soak thoroughly into the wood from 2 days to a week before you put on another one. And after you have reconditioned your bedstead, give it an oil rub once or twice a year.

"After each rubbing, dispose of your oily rags, or you may have a fire. Either wash them, burn them, or store them in a tightly closed metal container."

The next question is: What is the best way to clean a painted wall?

The Bureau of Home Economics says the right way to wash a painted wall is from the bottom up, using sponges. If water runs down on a soiled surface it leaves streaks. But the water won't stain the clean parts of a wall, as you work upward.

Make a light suds with a mild, neutral soap. Use two pails, one for suds and one for rinse water, and change them frequently. Wash a small area at a time, very lightly, and rinse away the soapy water with clear water. Wipe the surface with a clean soft cloth, and go on to the next section. If the wall is very dirty, you may have to add a little trisodium phosphate or some other alkali cleansing agent to the soap and water.

Speaking of wall cleaning, many people starch their walls. That is, they apply a thin coat of laundry starch to a washed wall with a clean paint brush. The idea is that next time the wall needs washing, the job is much easier, because the dirt washes off with the starch.

Our last letter is from a Vermont farmer's wife, who is thinking of taking overnight guests this summer. She asks for suggestions on ways to fix up the house that won't cost too much.

Florence L. Hall of the Extension Service answers this letter for us. She says she would concentrate on two things- inviting, spotless cleanliness everywhere, and good beds. You may need to paint- or at least, scrub,- all the woodwork in the house. The floors should certainly be freshly refinished. You may have to repaper or paint your walls, or possibly just wash them. Go over every piece of furniture and paint it or put it otherwise in perfect condition. All this takes more elbow grease than cash.

You'll want freshly laundered curtains at all windows, but not necessarily new ones. And clean,- if not new- slip covers on chairs requiring them. You can make a good supply of plain washable bureau scarfs out of odds and ends, but you may have to buy towels, sheets and other kinds of household linen in order to have plenty.

"Good springs and mattresses are very important. They may be your largest expense, unless you have to put in a bath-room. That, of course is absolutely essential if you want to attract a good tourist trade. Sleep at least once in each room you plan to rent, to check on details. First and foremost- is the bed comfortable? Are there enough blankets? Is the light well-placed and strong enough to

read by? Other conveniences include at least two comfortable chairs, a suit-case rack, a mirror, waste basket, ash tray, table, water glass, bedside mat, coat hangers.

"Where there is considerable vacation travel, farm women have found it profitable to take tourists, and you can get practical suggestions from others who have tried it, through your State extension service."

With that tip we'll stop for today. Look for more questions and answers next Tuesday.

